TRIBUTE

TO THE MEMORY OF

GENERAL JOHN A. DIX

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TRIBUTE

OF THE

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

OF THE

STATE OF NEW-YORK,

TO THE MEMORY OF

GENERAL JOHN A. DIX,

May 1, 1879.

ADDRESSES

BY

MR. A. A. LOW,

AND

MR. ELLIOT C. COWDIN.

NEW-YORK:

PRESS OF THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

1879.

TRIBUTE.

At the Annual Meeting of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New-York, held May 1, 1879, Mr. Samuel D. Babcock, President, in the Chair, the order of business having been suspended, Mr. A. A. Low addressed the Chamber as follows:

ADDRESS OF MR. A. A. LOW.

Mr. President: As we meet here to-day, we are called to lament the loss by death of one of the noblest and best of our fellow citizens, whose long and useful life was devoted to the service of his city, his State and his country; to the welfare of man, and to the praise of God.

John Adams Dix, (more familiarly known as John A. Dix,) who died on Monday, the 21st ultimo, was elected as an honorary member of this body on the 19th of April, 1861—a memorable day in our own history and that of our country. It was then that the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New-York, setting aside all distinctions of party, pledged itself to the support of the Government of the United States, and appointed a Committee to raise funds to carry on the war that had become imminent, in view of the crisis which events in the South had precipitated on the country. All who are familiar with the proceedings which followed the proclamation of the President of the United States, on the 15th of April, and the appointment of the Committee above referred to, will recollect that it was almost immediately merged in another, appointed by the citizens of New-York, and that the two, forming one organi-

zation, became known as the "*Union Defence Committee.*" Gen. DIX was elected President of the Association, and continued to act in that capacity till called to other duties. On retiring, his services were acknowledged in a series of appropriate resolutions. Thus, the name of the departed patriot and statesman will ever be associated with a period of peculiar interest in the history of this Chamber; and it is but natural that we should wish to place on our records some memorial of the man who filled so many distinguished offices in the service of his State and country, shedding lustre upon all; and to mark by what methods and by what manly virtue he rose to such distinction among his fellow men.

Of course this is not the time nor the place to do even partial justice to one who was so eminent and exemplary throughout his public and private career; but the impress of such a life upon the age in which he lived is precious, and we may not permit the event which brings it to a close to pass by unheeded. It should rather be our aim to hold up for imitation a type of manhood so conspicuous in him, which is as rare as it is noble.

I have, therefore, prepared a minute very briefly reciting some of the more important offices filled by General DIX, and beg leave to ask the passage of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the annexed memorandum be entered at length on the book of records of this Chamber, as a tribute of respect to the memory of our late honorary member, JOHN A. DIX, and that a copy thereof be transmitted to the family of the deceased, to testify to our admiration of his character, and heartfelt sympathy for the bereaved.

IN MEMORIAM.

Died, in this city, on Monday, the 21st day of April, 1879, JOHN ADAMS DIX, in the 81st year of his age. Born at the town of Boscawen, N. H., on the 24th of July, 1798, he was "sent from there at an early age to the academy at Salisbury, and afterwards to that at Exeter. When thirteen years old he entered a college at Montreal, pursuing his studies diligently till the breaking out of hostilities with Great Britain, when he found it necessary to return home."

After serving as an officer in the army of the United States for several years, and being attached to the staff of General BROWN, he married, and subsequently took up his abode in this city.

General DIX was endowed by nature with various gifts—with that taste for literature and desire for knowledge which industry ripens into scholarly attainment; with that ardent love of country which virtue exalts into lofty patriotism; with high and heroic aspirations for the honor to be gained in public life, which, guided by principle, lead up above the shifts and trammels of party to the dignity of an enlightened statesmanship.

The talents so generously bestowed were wisely improved, and his mind, bent on acquisition, was early enriched with the knowledge of other languages than his own, and, throughout life, the study of the classics was to him a source of pleasant recreation.

His fellow citizens were quick to discern, and to profit by, his culture, his loyalty and his known devotion to duty; and, as a consequence of his various qualifications, he was often called to the discharge of important public trusts; while, in times of peril, the people turned to him as an able leader—whether in the councils of the nation or in the army of the Union.

Some forty years of his life were employed in the service of the State and of the nation, and no higher tribute can be paid to his worth than to name the various offices which he filled and adorned:

In 1830—He was appointed Adjutant-General by Gov. THROOP.

In 1833—He was chosen Secretary of State of the State of New-York, and, by virtue of this office, was Superintendent of the Common Schools, a Member of the Canal Board, and one of the Commissioners of the Canal Fund.

In 1841—He was elected Member of the State Assembly.

In 1845—He was appointed to fill the vacancy in the United States Senate caused by the election of SILAS WRIGHT as Governor.

In 1853—He was made Assistant Treasurer of the United States at New-York.

In 1860—He was appointed as Postmaster at the City of New-York.

In 1861—During the crisis which preceded the outbreak of the rebellion, he was called to Washington, by President BUCHANAN, to take a place in his Cabinet as Secretary of the Treasury; from which office he retired, with the inauguration of Mr. LINCOLN as President, the following March.

Returning to New-York, he was elected as Chairman of the Union Defence Committee: this office, as we have seen, he resigned to accept an appointment as Major-General of Volunteers; President LINCOLN, in the June following, giving him the same rank in the regular army.

He was then ordered to the command of the army of Maryland.

In 1862—He was transferred to East Virginia, North Carolina being afterwards added to the Department. His headquarters were subsequently removed to New York, where he remained until 1866, when he resigned.

In 1866—He was nominated as Naval Officer at New-York, and, soon afterwards, as Minister to France.

At the organization of the Union Pacific Rail-Road Company he was elected President, and afterwards, in 1872, he was made provisional President of the Erie Railway.

In 1872—He was elected Governor of the State of New-York, and served the regular term of two years.

In other lands, under other institutions, long and faithful service to the State is honored with rank and title and costly decorations; but, in ours, Republican simplicity bears away the glory of personal achievement to swell the volume of National renown.

Let it be our privilege to cherish the name and the memory of the patriot and statesman who has so recently left

us, for what he did to exalt the character of the nation—in whose work, and for whose fame, he wrought so well. And may the Church with which he was closely connected, and society which he adorned with his presence, gratefully preserve the recollections of a life that was full of grace and beauty ; and the honor which he kept so bright will continue to reflect its lustre on those who shall follow in his footsteps, for generations to come.

ADDRESS OF MR. ELLIOT C. COWDIN.

Mr. President: I cordially second the resolution that has just been submitted. A soldier, a statesman, a scholar, a patriot, a model citizen—John A. Dix—long an honorary member of this Chamber, has passed away.

Born and reared among the rugged hills of New-Hampshire, the sprightly and ardent youth, at the outbreak of the war with Great Britain in 1812, he having just reached his fourteenth year, was appointed a cadet in the army, and assigned to active service at Baltimore, where his father was in command of a regiment. He remained in the army till 1826, rising gradually to the rank of Captain, and for the last seven years was Aid-de-Camp to the Commander-in-Chief. On retiring from military service he pursued the study of the law, was admitted to the bar in 1828, and settled in the beautiful village of Cooperstown.

He now entered upon a public career that filled half a century with valuable services, and won for him honorable fame. Holding during this long period a large number of important offices, he always rose to the level of the emergency while discharging the onerous, and often delicate, duties devolved upon him.

For the two years he was Adjutant-General of the State of New-York, he took pride in perfecting the discipline of our militia.

In 1833 he was elected Secretary of State, holding that responsible position for six years. He was *ex-officio* a member of the Canal Board, and Superintendent of Common Schools. The former brought him into close relations with

Wm. L. Marcy, Silas Wright, William C. Bouck and Azariah C. Flagg, just as the State was embarking on the munificent enterprise of enlarging the Erie Canal. His distinguished associates in the Board regarded him as wise in council and vigorous in execution. But his noblest work was in behalf of public instruction. Of the many devoted and sagacious friends of popular education who have held the office of Superintendent, General Dix was certainly one of the most efficient and judicious. For his labors in that department, the children of the State who resort to these nurseries of education owe him a debt of gratitude. By virtue of his office, he was a Regent of the University, and took pleasure in promoting the interests of our higher seats of learning, the academies and colleges of the State.

His valuable geological report to the Legislature while Secretary of State, prepared the way for the elaborate treatise on the Natural History of New-York.

General Dix was soon to test his powers in another field. He was a member of the Assembly of 1842. That session was remarkable in the annals of the State, not only for the importance of the questions agitated in the Legislature, but for the number of able men that appeared in the lower House. By his statesmanlike bearing in the Assembly, he achieved a reputation that prepared the way for his election to the Senate of the United States. He took his seat in January, 1845, and remained in the Senate until March, 1849. During these four years the Senate Chamber shone with resplendent talents, while Congress and the country were shaken with controversies concerning the annexation of Texas, the joint occupation of Oregon, the war with Mexico, and the prohibition of slavery in the vast territories acquired by the peace. Webster, Calhoun, Benton, Crittenden, Cass, Corwin, Douglass, Jefferson Davis, and other eminent debaters, took the lead in the stormy discussions on these questions. Such forensic displays would have awed to silence a young Senator less firm and faithful than General Dix. But he delivered able speeches on all the pending issues, while in respect to the one absorbing topic of that memorable era, he advocated with rare courage and

eloquence the constitutional power of Congress to prohibit slavery in the territories of the Union.

Faithful to this, he was not unmindful of other important interests. He was warmly devoted to the promotion of the commerce of the country, and the improvement of its revenue laws. As Chairman of the Committee on Commerce, he carried through Congress the Warehouse System, which thenceforward became a permanent element in our customs policy. He exhibited marked courtesy toward the merchants and business men generally, and was always ready at their call to step aside from the most exciting debates in the Chamber, to receive information from them, or serve them in any proper way.

On his retirement from the Senate, he turned with alacrity once more to the study of the law and the cultivation of literature, always congenial occupations to him.

Having taken an active share in the Presidential campaign of 1852, General PIERCE, President-elect, offered him the Premiership in his Cabinet, which he was disposed to accept, but ultra Southern politicians protested so vehemently, that the offer was withdrawn.

The elements of integrity, fidelity and suavity, mingled with a rare kind of diplomatic skill, were so prominent in the character of General DIX, that he was often summoned as a councillor and coadjutor in sudden exigencies. One of our venerable and opulent ecclesiastical establishments, two of our largest railway corporations, and even the Federal Government itself, have invoked his aid in such crises. Striking examples of this occurred when President BUCHANAN, in a critical emergency, appointed him Postmaster of this city, and again, just at the close of his administration, sought his support in an hour of extreme peril. We stood at the very gates of the rebellion. States were seceding from the Union. The Cabinet was breaking up. The President saw that he was betrayed. His legal advisers lost heart. The conspirators among them were in league with the rebels. HOWELL COBB, the Secretary of the Treasury, had joined the insurgents. Mr. BUCHANAN summoned General DIX to Washington to take up the seals which the traitor had thrown down. He instantly obeyed

the call. It was during his brief term as Secretary of the Treasury that he issued, to an agent of the Department at New-Orleans, that famous order which will ever remain a part of the patriotic literature of the country: "If any man attempts to haul down the American Flag, shoot him on the spot."

On the inauguration of President LINCOLN, in 1861, General DIX again returned to private life, but only for a brief period. The guns of Sumter were echoing throughout the land and the whole people were aroused. "Shall the Union be preserved, one and indivisible?" Or, "shall the erring sisters be permitted to depart in peace?" were questions uppermost in every mind.

In that hour of national peril, General DIX occupied no equivocal position. He was for his country—the whole country. Shortly after the new administration came into power, when the patriotic masses of this city poured their tens of thousands into Union Square, to devise measures for the preservation of the Republic, General DIX was called to preside, and there gave the key note to the loyal voice of the nation, irrespective of party, in these thrilling words:

"I am for supporting the Government. I do not ask who administers it. It is the Government of my country, and as such I shall give it in this extremity all the support in my power. * * * Let us remember that nothing could be so disastrous, so humiliating and so disreputable to us all as to see our common Government overthrown or its legitimate authority successfully resisted. Let us, then, rally, with one heart, to its support." * * *

Turning toward the statue of WASHINGTON, he exclaimed:

"If the inanimate being in which the sculptor has shaped his image could be changed to the living form which led the armies of the Revolution to victory, he would command us, in the name of the hosts of patriots and political martyrs who have gone before, to stand for the defence of the Union and the Constitution."

The military services of General DIX in the civil war are gratefully remembered, especially in this city, where for a considerable time he was in command. In the alarming

crisis when the turbulent classes rose to resist the draft, and carried dismay into all our habitations, his courageous counsels largely aided in suppressing the revolt.

I may be pardoned for referring, in this connection, to an incident which illustrates his devotion to duty amid surrounding dangers. Happening to be a member of the Republican State Convention for nominating a candidate for Governor in 1864, I presented the name of General DIX for that office. The Convention received it with enthusiastic applause. It will be remembered that he was then in command of the Military Department of the East, with head-quarters in this city. I joined in a telegram from Syracuse, where the Convention was in session, asking him if he would accept the nomination for Governor. The response was prompt and decisive: "I cannot, under any circumstances."

On the resignation of Mr. BIGELOW, as Minister to France, General DIX was appointed to that important mission, and held it during the Paris Exposition of 1867, and until succeeded by Mr. WASHBURNE, in May, 1869. Being much in Paris, I can testify that he was an able and highly popular representative. His elevated character, his tranquil dignity, his generous hospitality, and his uniform courtesy and kindness, won all hearts, and are remembered with affection and gratitude.

A little circumstance will show how tenacious was his recollection in regard to the famous telegram already mentioned: As General DIX was about to leave France, on the termination of his mission, the American residents in Paris gave him a public banquet, at which more than three hundred and fifty ladies and gentlemen sat down. There were present his successor, Mr. WASHBURNE, Mr. BURLINGAME, then Ambassador from China, Governor BULLOCK, of Massachusetts, and other distinguished persons. Having been chosen to preside on that occasion, it devolved upon me to deliver the opening address. Of course I did not omit the historic telegram, but quoting from memory, I used the words, "*Whoever* attempts to haul down the American flag," &c. Promptly General

Dix, in a modest note, informed me that the precise language of his order was, "*If any man* attempts to haul down the American flag," &c. This correction, trifling as it may seem, not only illustrates his exactness in small particulars, but it shows with what tenacity the memory of the veteran soldier and statesman clung to this patriotic passage of his life.

The crowning event of his public career was his gubernatorial administration. The manner in which he fulfilled the duties of that exalted station compares favorably with that of our most illustrious chief magistrate—with that of Tompkins and Clinton, Marcy and Seward. When he retired from the Capitol, in his seventy-seventh year, it could be truly said of him, that—

> "Age sat with comely grace upon his visage,
> And worthily became his silver locks;
> He wore the marks of many years well spent,
> Of virtue, truth well-tried, and wise experience."

The life we have contemplated carries us back to the days of Washington, and awakens echoes of the struggle of the Colonies to break away from their allegiance to the British Crown. It brings us down to the grand epoch when, at the close of a severer conflict, the Republic threw off the yoke of sectional domination. Ever the ardent friend of free institutions, and of the Federal Constitution, as their best embodiment, our model citizen drew his sword in early youth in defence of his country, and in old age wielded it for the preservation of the Union.

Though General Dix held more civil trusts than any of his contemporaries, he never demeaned himself to obtain rank and station. Office sought him, as it ever should seek men of real merit; and in the discharge of his duties, even his bitterest opponents never questioned the stainless purity of his record.

The great variety of the posts he was called to fill was largely due to his elasticity of mind and wonderful capacity for tracing the outlines and mastering the details of any new question. In the diversity of his civil services, perhaps

the only parallel in American history is found in the career of JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, one of those rare characters which in youth exhibits the wisdom of age, and in age displays the vigor of youth.

Among the recent European statesmen to whom he may not inaptly be compared, the most striking figures are PALMERSTON and THIERS. The octogenarian Premier gallantly leading the attack, night after night, upon the foes of his Ministry in the House of Commons; the octogenarian President, with the vivacity of middle life, maintaining his policy, day by day, against powerful assailants in the Chamber of Deputies, bore close analogy to the ability and eloquence wherewith the venerable Governor of New-York defended his administration in the autumn of 1874, on many platforms, in the presence of thousands of his fellow citizens.

His education was as versatile as his employments were varied. Though carefully taught in early youth, his studies were interrupted at the age of fourteen by military duties. Thenceforward he was mainly self-taught, which made him through life self-reliant. His knowledge covered a wide field, and on important subjects it was as profound as it was exact. Called to deal with a great variety of topics, he illumined and adorned every question he touched. He was master of the law of nations, and of the peculiar policy of Ecclesiastical tribunals. He could emerge from the turmoil of politics, and delight an audience of scholars by an address on the study of the classics. He even wooed the muses with success in his few leisure hours. His delight in the avocations of horticulture and agriculture was shown in an address on "Rural Life and Embellishment," delivered before his Long Island friends, at Jamaica, in 1851, and by an address on "The Agriculture of New-York," at the State Fair at Albany, in 1859; while the pride he felt in our great metropolis was evinced in his most instructive lecture, entitled "The City of New-York; its Growth, Destiny and Duties," given before the Historical Society, in 1853.

Such is a mere outline of an historic character, a noble type of American manhood in one of its grandest develop-

ments. The life of him whose loss we deplore will ever remain an instructive chapter in the history of the nation. Its lessons will stimulate youth to patriotic endeavors to be useful to their country, and encourage age to consecrate their declining years to the promotion of its unity, prosperity and glory.

The resolution was unanimously adopted, and the addresses of Messrs. Low and COWDIN, were ordered to be entered at length on the minutes of the Chamber, and be printed, and a copy sent to the family of General DIX.

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